

# Reflections of African American Patriots at Valley Forge

## Overview

There are many little known stories in our nation's history. We are challenged to uncover them and to analyze their significance to our nation and to us as individuals.

## Objectives

- Students will examine the presence of African American soldiers in the Revolutionary War.
- Students will explore possible perspectives of key figures of that time.
- Summarize information from a variety of sources on a Black patriot by writing a focused response to an open-ended question and participating in class discussions.

## Activities

### Analyze a Visual Image- Activity 1

### Significance of Multiple Perspectives- Activity 2

### Analyze Lord Dunmore's Proclamation-Activity 3

- Vocabulary
- Read (Silently)
- Reread
- Analysis
- Discussion

### Interactive Reading Protocol: Virginia Response -Activity 4

### Analyze a Historical Figure: Salem Poor-Activity 5

- Read and discuss various documents that provide information about Salem Poor.
- Complete Chart in small groups
- Write an essay about the Revolutionary War including new information about Black Patriots use the information provided to support your response.



## Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated through class discussions and written activities.

## Enduring Understanding:

A comprehensive view of history includes stories told from multiple perspectives.

## Essential Questions:

How does broadening our perspectives to include missing points of view enhance learning about history?

What does analysis of the little known story of Black Patriots, like Salem Poor, reveal about the perspectives and challenges of the soldiers during the Revolutionary War?

How does analysis of the little known story of Black Patriots, like Salem Poor, contribute to the body of well-known information about the Revolutionary War?

**Grade level:** Sixth Grade-Eighth Grade

**Subject:** Reading/Language Arts-Informational Text, Colonial History, Military and Wartime History, Revolutionary War

**Setting:** Classroom

### **Pennsylvania State Standards:**

8.1: Historical Analysis and Skills Development: 8.1.6. B, 8.1.7. B, 8.1.8. B

R7.A.1.3.1 Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from the text.

R7.A.1.3.2 Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.

R7.A.1.4 Comprehension and Reading Skills ~ understand fiction appropriate to grade level.  
Identify and explain main ideas and relevant details.

### **Common Core Standards:**

WHST.6-8.4, WHST.6-8.9

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2 Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.7.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

# *The Power of Place: Site Visit*

## Valley Forge National Historical Park Connections

According to Thomas Fleming in *Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge*, the Valley Forge encampment included many African Americans. The First Rhode Island Regiment, in General James Varnum's Brigade, consisted largely of African American and Native American soldiers. Fleming cites work by independent researcher George Quintal, who has used pension records and other sources to document at least five hundred African Americans at Valley Forge. They include Shadrack Battles, a 32-year-old "free man of color" who enlisted in the Tenth Virginia Regiment in December 1779, and Windsor Fry, another free black man who served with the First Rhode Island Regiment. Salem Poor of Massachusetts, who purchased his freedom, came to Valley Forge after distinguished service at Bunker Hill and Saratoga. African Americans at Valley Forge included slaves serving as substitutes for their masters; one of these was Samuel Surphen in the New Jersey Brigade (Fleming, 142-43).

The back of the memorial reads:

"In Honor of the PATRIOTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT who served, suffered and sacrificed during the Valley Forge Encampment 1777-1778." There is also a quote by Charles L. Blockson, the founder of the Blockson Collection of African American historical documents at Temple University: "Throughout these historic and hallowed campsites were courageous Black Patriots who participated in our nation's bitter fight for independence." Visit Valley Forge National Historical Park to experience the power of the American stories told from shared from multiple perspectives.



## Teaching Strategy: Analyze a Visual Image

Look closely at the image. Describe what you see with as much detail as possible. Write down below what you see without making any interpretation about what the picture is trying to say.

Complete the statement: *When looking at this image, I see . . .*

**Interpret:** Given what you see and what you know about the image, what do you think it means? What message do you think the creator is trying to express? What other messages, if any, does this image express? Complete the statements: *The message/s this image sends to me is . . . I think the creator is trying to say . . .*

**Predict:** What do you think might have been the intended purpose of this image? Who was the intended audience? Do you think this image effectively achieves its purpose? Why or why not? Complete the statement: *Based on my analysis of this image, I think it did/did not achieve its purpose because . . .*

**Sharing and Comparing Analysis:** Students deepen their understanding of an image and develop their interpretation skills when they have the opportunity to see how others analyzed the same image. Small-group presentations, whole-class discussion, and the jigsaw peer-teaching strategy represent a few ways that students can share their ideas about an image. After students hear from their peers, give them time to revise their analysis based on this new information.

**Strategy is from:** <http://www.facinghistory.org>

## Analyze a Visual Image-Activity 1

Look at the picture below and answer the questions that follow.



1. **Describe:** What do you see? Record as many details as you can.
2. **Interpret:** Based on your description, what do you think it means?  
What does this image represent?
3. **Predict:** Why do you think the image was created?

# The Multiple Perspectives Protocol-Activity 2

*Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF*

Used for developing a broader understanding of a topic, problem solving, and to deepen the understanding of multiple points of view.

## Rationale

Protocols can help us to develop the habits that we want to maintain in our daily lives. This protocol was designed to help make the process of using multiple perspectives to enrich our conversations, broaden our understanding of various topics, and to make our learning more powerful. This means more than bringing various voices together. It also means purposefully seeing what each voice contributes to the whole.

## Time

50 minutes

## Procedure

Participants introduce themselves — name, point of view. Facilitator points out that point of view can be broadly defined — “woman”, “African American”, “parent” or, more narrowly, “sixth grade student”, “teenager” or “athlete”. Participants are encouraged (and supported) while selecting their identifying perspectives according to the group’s purpose. Clearly this involves judgment, but no one’s self-selected perspective should be argued with; however, all should be willing to negotiate. It must be stressed that we all have multiple ways we could describe ourselves and, for the purposes of this protocol, we will settle on one or two. e.g. “I am a female teacher who is committed to the idea that the legal age for driving should be eighteen.” (7 minutes)

Facilitator presents a question which has emerged from the work of the group or that is related to the goal of the work. e.g. “Do you believe U.S. public schools are equal?” (3 minutes)

All students write their first thoughts about the question as related to their point of view on a post-it note. (5 minutes)

Each participant, in turn, gives their preliminary thinking on the question, prefaced with their point of view: “From the point of view of a student, I think...” (10 minutes)

Then there is a second round, with each person giving their thinking *based upon what they heard from the other participants*: “Having heard all of the other points of view, I now think...” (10 minutes)

A final round to reflect on the quality of the responses: “I noticed that my/our responses...” (15 minutes)

*Teacher could then make the connection that history is often recorded from an individual perspective. As a result, we are challenged to study multiple sources about a given topic to gain a broader understanding of the time period or historical event. The stories of the patriots of African descent are often untold in traditional historical texts. Their stories have been the missing perspective in the narrative of the struggle for our nation’s independence.*

Protocol from: <http://www.nsrffharmony.org>

## Analyzing a Primary Source- Activity 3

### Lord Dunmore's Proclamation on Slave Emancipation (1775)

This historic proclamation, dated November 7, 1775 and issued from on board a British warship lying off Norfolk, Virginia, by royal governor and Scottish aristocrat John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, offered the first large-scale emancipation of slave and servant labor in the history of colonial British America. It grew out of Dunmore's efforts to counter an impending attack on his capital of Williamsburg by patriot militia in the spring of 1775, when he several times threatened to free and arm slaves to defend the cause of royal government. By the time he retreated offshore he was already gathering slaves seeking refuge; his November proclamation commanding Virginians to support the crown or be judged traitors now formally offered freedom to all slaves and indentured servants belonging to rebels and able to bear arms for the crown. Within weeks, several hundred slaves, many with their families, had joined him. They enlisted in what Dunmore christened his "Ethiopian Regiment" and formed the bulk of the royal troops that first defeated patriot forces but then fell victim to disease and attack, evacuating the Chesapeake Region for New York by August 1776.

Dunmore's proclamation offered freedom only to those who would flee from rebel masters and serve the crown. Its purpose was strategic; to disable rebellion, rather than humanitarian, yet its effect was rather the reverse. White southerner colonists swung to oppose royal authority as it appeared that Dunmore and his proclamation were inciting slave insurrection: nothing, it can be argued, so quickly lost the South for the crown. British officialdom, however, never repudiated the proclamation's message and soon established an alliance with black Americans that brought thousands of escaped southern slaves to the side of the British forces operating in the south. The role and plight of these fugitives during and after the Revolutionary War would alter the course of a host of black lives and help swell sentiment, particularly in Britain, for an end to slavery and the slave trade. A short-term failure, Dunmore's proclamation set in motion events far beyond its author's intentions.

#### Sources:

Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, and the Making of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Sylvia R. Frey, *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

**Contributor(s):** Johnson, Richard

## Vocabulary- Activity 3

**Indented servants-** indentured servants or servants bound to their master for a term of years, after which they are released.

**Lieutenant-** literally, "one who holds the place of," in this instance, of the king of England; the king's representative.

**Quit-rents-** A land tax imposed on owned or leased land by the landowning authority, usually the government.

**Sixteenth year of His Majesty's reign-** 1775, the sixteenth year of the reign of George III of England, who assumed the throne in the year 1760.

**Tenders-** Generally, small ships or boats used to attend other ships and supply them with provisions.

## TRANSCRIPTION- Activity 3

### Transcription of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation

By His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN Earl of DUNMORE, His Majesty's Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony and Dominion of VIRGINIA, and Vice Admiral of the same.

#### A PROCLAMATION

As I have ever entertained Hopes, that an Accommodation might have taken Place between GREAT-BRITAIN and this Colony, without being compelled by my Duty to this most disagreeable but now absolutely necessary Step, rendered so by a Body of armed Men unlawfully assembled, firing on His MAJESTY'S Tenders, and the formation of an Army, and that Army now on their March to attack his MAJESTY'S Troops and destroy the well disposed subjects of the Colony. To defeat such treasonable Purposes, and that all such Traitors, and their Abettors, may be brought to Justice, and that the Peace, and good Order of this Colony may be again restored, which the ordinary Course of the Civil Law is unable to effect; I have thought fit to issue this my Proclamation, hereby declaring, that until the aforesaid good Purpose can be obtained, I do in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by His MAJESTY, determine to execute Martial Law, and cause the same to be executed throughout this Colony: and to the end that Peace and good Order may the sooner be restored, I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His MAJESTY'S STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty the Law inflicts upon such Offenses; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of Lands, & &. And I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His MAJESTY'S Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Dignity. I do further order, and require, all His MAJESTY'S Liege Subjects, to retain their Quitrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become due, in their own Custody, till such a Time as Peace may be again restored to this at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former salutary Purposes, by Officers properly authorized to receive the same.

GIVEN under my Hand on board the Ship WILLIAM by Norfolk, the 7th Day of November in the SIXTEENTH Year of His MAJESTY'S Reign.

DUNMORE (GOD save the KING.)

Lord Dunmore's Proclamation. Digital History. Retrieved (August 6, 2013) from [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning\\_history/revolution/dunsmore.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/revolution/dunsmore.cfm).

By His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN Earl of DUNMORE, His  
MAJESTY'S Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony and Dominion of  
VIRGINIA, and Vice Admiral of the same.

## A P R O C L A M A T I O N.

AS I have ever entertained Hopes that an Accommodation might have  
taken Place between GREAT-BRITAIN and this Colony, without being  
compelled by my Duty to this most disagreeable but now absolutely necessary  
Step, rendered so by a Body of armed Men unlawfully assembled, firing on His  
MAJESTY'S Tenders, and the formation of an Army, and that Army now on  
their March to attack His MAJESTY'S Troops and destroy the well disposed Sub-  
jects of this Colony. To defeat such treasonable Purposes, and that all such  
Traitors, and their Abettors, may be brought to Justice, and that the Peace, and  
good Order of this Colony may be again restored, which the ordinary Course  
of the Civil Law is unable to effect; I have thought fit to issue this my Pro-  
clamation, hereby declaring, that until the aforesaid good Purposes can be ob-  
tained, I do in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by His MAJES-  
TY, determine to execute Martial Law, and cause the same to be executed  
throughout this Colony: and to the end that Peace and good Order may the  
sooner be effected, I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort  
to His MAJESTY'S STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to His  
MAJESTY'S Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty  
the Law inflicts upon such Offences; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of  
Lands, &c. &c. And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes,  
or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms,  
they joining His MAJESTY'S Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily  
reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His MAJESTY'S  
Crown and Dignity. I do further order, and require, all His MAJESTY'S Loyal  
Subjects, to retain their Quittrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become  
due, in their own Custody, till such Time as Peace may be again restored to this  
at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former salu-  
tary Purposes, by Officers properly authorized to receive the same.

GIVEN under my Hand on board the Ship WILLIAM, off NORFOLK,  
the 7th Day of NOVEMBER, in the SIXTEENTH Year of His MAJESTY'S Reign.

DUNMORE.

(GOD save the KING.)

Image Credit: University of Virginia Library

## Analyzing a Primary Source Document-Activity 3

Who is the creator of the document?	
What is the idea being addressed in this source?	
What is the time and place that this source comes from?	
What historical events occurred during this time period?	
Who is the document being written for?	
Why would the author write this piece? Is the creator trying to change or explain something?	

## Activity 4

### A Virginian responds to Dunmore's Proclamation

From the *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), November 25, 1775.

The second class of people, for whose sake a few remarks upon this proclamation seem necessary, is the Negroes. They have been flattered with their freedom, if they be able to bear arms, and will speedily join Lord Dunmore's troops. To none then is freedom promised but to such as are able to do Lord Dunmore service: The aged, the infirm, the women and children, are still to remain the property of their masters, masters who will be provoked to severity, should part of their slaves desert them. Lord Dunmore's declaration, therefore, is a cruel declaration to the Negroes. He does not even pretend to make it out of any tenderness to them, but solely on his own account; and should it meet with success, it leaves by far the greater number at the mercy of an enraged and injured people. But should there be any amongst the Negroes weak enough to believe that Dunmore intends to do them a kindness, and wicked enough to provoke the fury of the Americans against their defenseless fathers and mothers, their wives, their women and children, let them only consider the difficulty of effecting their escape, and what they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans. Let them farther consider what must be their fate, should the English prove conquerors in this dispute. If we can judge of the future from the past, it will not be much mended. Long have the Americans, moved by compassion, and actuated by sound policy, endeavoured to stop the progress of slavery. Our Assemblies have repeatedly passed acts laying heavy duties upon imported Negroes, by which they meant altogether to prevent the horrid traffick; but their humane intentions have been as often frustrated by the cruelty and covetousness of a set of English merchants, who prevailed upon the King to repeal our kind and merciful acts, little indeed to the credit of his humanity. Can it then be supposed that the Negroes will be better used by the English, who have always encouraged and upheld this slavery, than by their present masters, who pity their condition, who wish, in general, to make is as easy and comfortable as possible, and who would willingly, were it in their power, or were they permitted, not only prevent any more Negroes from losing their freedom, but restore it to such as have already unhappily lost it. No, the ends of Lord Dunmore and his party being answered, they will either give up the offending Negroes to the rigour of the laws they have broken, or sell them in the West Indies, where every year they sell many thousands of their miserable brethren, to perish either by the inclemency of the weather, or the cruelty of barbarous masters. Be not then, ye Negroes, tempted by this proclamation to ruin yourselves. I have given you a faithful view of what you are to expect; and I declare, before **GOD**, in doing it, I have considered your welfare, as well as that of the country. Whether you will profit by my advice I cannot tell; but this I know, that whether we suffer or not, if you desert us, you most certainly will.

## Four “A”s Text Protocol- Activity 4

*Adapted from Judith Gray, Seattle, WA 2005*

The group reads the text silently; highlighting it and writing notes in the margin on post-it notes in answer to the following four questions (you can also add your own “A”s ).

- What **Assumptions** does the author of the text hold?
  - What do you **Agree** with in the text?
  - What do you want to **Argue** with in the text?
  - Do you believe the author **Achieved** his or her purpose for writing the text?
- 1) In a round, have each person identify one assumption in the text, citing the text (with page numbers or paragraphs) as evidence.
  - 2) Either continue in rounds or facilitate a conversation in which the group talks about the text in light of each of the remaining “A”s, taking them one at a time – what do people want to argue with, agree with, and aspire to in the text?
  - 3) Try to move seamlessly from one “A” to the next, giving each “A” enough time for full exploration.
  - 4) End the session with an open discussion framed around a question such as: What did this mean for the enslaved African American? What does this mean for the free African Americans? What does this say about the popular beliefs of this time period?
  - 5) Debrief the text experience.

## SALEM POOR

American Revolutionary Soldier



Even though he had proven his loyalty and his bravery during the Battle of Bunker Hill, Salem Poor was almost released from the American forces because of the fear the Continental Congress had of arming slaves. During the Battle of Charleston, fought on this day in 1775, Poor is credited with killing British

Lt. Colonel James Abercrombie. His gallant service prompted 14 white officers to send a petition on his behalf to the General Court of Massachusetts. The petition read in part: *"...Wee declare that A Negro Man called Salem Poor of Col. Frye's Regiment... in the late Battle of Charleston, behaved like an Experienced officer, as well as an Excellent Soldier... We would only beg leave to Stay in the Person of this Negro Centers a Brave and Gallant Soldier. The reward due to so great and distinguished a character. We Submit to the Congress."* Salem Poor earned commendation for his outstanding leadership and valor. Continuing his service, he survived the brutal and deadly winter at Valley Forge, in which many of General George Washington's men either starved, froze to death, or deserted. Poor also served at White Plains.

## X\* Salem Poor

Age: 33

Occupation: N/A

Residence: Andover, MA

Description: 'Negro'

Status: free

Religion: Congregational

Rank: Private

Unit: Frye / Ames

Stationed: redoubt

Salem Poor was born probably circa 1742. All known accounts agree that he was purchased as an infant at the slave market in Salem (MA) by Lydia Abbot, a young woman, and brought home to Andover by horseback on the bow of her saddle.<sup>1</sup> He was baptized in what is now North Andover (MA) in 1747.<sup>2</sup>

On 10 July 1769, upon the payment of £27 in purchase of his own freedom, he was issued an official manumission by his master John Poor 3rd.<sup>3</sup> Five years later, in the warrant for the Andover town meeting of 17 March 1774, an article 'for the provision of support for [his] wife and children ... returned a negative vote'.<sup>4</sup>

There is no known record of his enlistment in the eight months' service, yet he was clearly present at the Battle of Bunker Hill as is proven by a petition citing his bravery.<sup>5</sup> In 1880, respected historian Sarah Loring Bailey of Andover described the local tradition associated with Salem Poor's heroic service [see cautionary footnote]:

The story goes that "Salem Poor," a slave, owned by Mr. John Poor, shot Lieutenant-colonel [James] Abercrombie. As that officer sprang on the redoubt, while our men were in retreat, and exclaimed, "The day is ours," Salem turned and took aim and fired. He saw the officer fall.<sup>6</sup>

His name is listed on a 6 October 1775 company return and on a 13 December 1775 'order for bounty coat or its equivalent in money dated Boston'.<sup>7</sup>

As the American attack on Canada crumbled, the call went out for reinforcements for the Northern Department. He responded by enlisting on 14 May 1776 in Capt. Abram Tyler's company, in Col. Edmund Phinney's regiment of Maine militia. This unit served at Fort George, at the southern terminus of Lake George, during the time of the defeat of the American fleet on Lake Champlain under Gen. Benedict Arnold. His name appears on an 8 December 1776 muster roll 'dated Garrison

<sup>1</sup> LJOY, 74 gives the most detailed account:

"There is a tradition that Lydia Abbot [b. 1723], when a girl, went to Salem, Mass with her father one day and when passing the slave market bought a negro infant and brought it home on her saddle. She gave it to her dau., Chloe [b. 1753], and the child was called Salem Pony."

LJOY, 75 states that Chloe Lovejoy, who owned Salem, married John Poor in 1776. ABB1, Lovejoy, 21 confirms this but states that the child was brought home "in [Lydia's] saddle bag". ABB2, 424 repeats the story. ABB2, 90-105 states that Salem was part of Chloe's dowry. This does not reconcile with Chloe's 1776 marriage date to John Poor, at which time Salem would have been free for seven years. It is more probable that Salem was part of Lydia Abbot's dowry. This source also states that "One of the grand-mothers brought the infant up from Salem on her saddle as she returned from a visit 'to see the ships come in' as a lass." The choice of 1742 as a birth year for Salem would correspond with an age of 19 for Lydia Abbot.

<sup>2</sup> MAVR, Andover, Births, 391; referencing a North Parish Congregational Church record.

<sup>3</sup> MS 0.569, property of Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem (MA) [see copy and transcription following]; permission to publish kindly granted by Mary Ann Campbell, Archivist; many thanks to Ilene Jones-Cornwell of Nashville (TN) who first alerted me to the existence of this extremely rare document.

<sup>4</sup> ANDR, 55.

<sup>5</sup> See "Analysis of the Fourteen Signers of the Salem Poor Petition for Bravery" [following].

<sup>6</sup> AND2, 323-4. This version must be accepted with great caution. Very similar actions are attributed to Peter Salem (see his sketch for more details), with the British officer in his case being Major John Pitcairn. Salem Poor's bravery in the redoubt is unquestioned; however, whether he indeed shot Lt. Col. Abercrombie could not be proven or disproven in the course of this study.

<sup>7</sup> MASS 12:561; listed as 'Poor'.

at Fort George'.<sup>8</sup> On 25 October 1777 he was allowed payment for 1776 incidentals to service, which consisted of thirty miles travel to headquarters at Cambridge and six days billeting.<sup>9</sup>

Upon his return home in early 1777, he rejoined the local militia in Capt. Samuel Johnson's 1st Andover company. With Gen. Burgoyne preparing to advance on northern New York, the call once again went out for soldiers to meet this serious threat. He joined the Continental Army on 11 May 1777 for a three-year term in the company of Capt. Nathaniel Alexander, in Col. Edward Wigglesworth's Massachusetts regiment. This unit served at Saratoga. Upon the surrender of Burgoyne, the regiment marched to winter quarters at Valley Forge. His name appears on a May 1778 muster roll 'dated 'Camp Valley Forge'. During June 1778 he was stationed at 'Camp near White Plains'. By October 1778 command of the regiment had been taken over by Maj. John Porter and in March and April 1779 the regiment was stationed at Providence. He was discharged 20 March 1780.<sup>10</sup>

His name does not appear in the 1790 U.S. Census and, despite the efforts of numbers of serious researchers, neither the date nor the place of his death have ever been found.

In commemoration of the Bicentennial in 1975, the U.S. Post Office issued a 10 cent stamp in his honor.<sup>11</sup> In January 2001, the National Park Service issued a site bulletin celebrating his life and his services to his country.<sup>12</sup>

Salem Poor married Nancy Parker, a 'mulatto' 'free woman' and former servant of Capt. James Parker, in Andover on 4 November 1771.<sup>13</sup> They had at least one child:

1. Jonas            bpt. 29 September 1776 in [North] Andover<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 12:576; listed as 'Pore'.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 12:561.

<sup>11</sup> Scott# 1560.

<sup>12</sup> Researched and composed by Emily G. Prigot, Park Ranger, Boston NHP [see copy].

<sup>13</sup> MAVR, Andover, Marriages, 359; Salem is listed as 'a free negro' and 'late servant of John Poor'; referencing a North Parish Congregational Church record.

<sup>14</sup> MAVR, Andover, Births, 390; referencing a North Parish Congregational Church record. She is described as 'a half-breed Indian' in: ABB1, Poor Family, 7.

I know all men by these Presents, That I, John  
Burjess, of Andover, in the County of Essex, in his  
Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New  
England, ye man, for and in Consideration of the  
Sum of twenty seven Pounds, lawful money, paid and  
delivered to me by my Negro man Servant, named  
Salem, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge  
and for Divers other good Causes and Considerations, me  
thereunto moving, Do by these Presents, freely give and  
grant to the Said Salem, Freedom and full liberty to  
depart and go out from under my Command & Controul  
and to acquire to him self & to his own use and benefit a  
such gains and profits as he can by any lawful business  
or Employment During his natural Life.  
In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand & Seal,  
the tenth day of July, Anno que Domini 1769,  
In the ninth year of his Majesty's R. n. \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed, Sealed & Delivered

Benjamin Deo,  
Esq. for R. n. \_\_\_\_\_

Essex, ss Andover, July 10th, 1769  
mt John Burjess Subscribed the above writt  
in presence of \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_ Benjamin Deo, Esq. for R. n. \_\_\_\_\_

Box # \_\_\_\_\_

Folder # MSS 0.569

Manumission Document of **Salem Poor**

*Know all men by these Presents, That I, John Poor, jun<sup>r</sup>, of Andover, in the County of Essex, in his Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, yeoman, for and in Consideration of the sum of twenty seven Pounds, lawful money, paid and delivered to me by my Negro man Servant, named **Salem**, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, and for Divers other good Causes and Considerations, me thereunto moving, Do by these Presents, freely give and grant to the said Salem, Freedom and full liberty to depart and go out from under my Command & Controul and to acquire to himself & to his own use and benefit all such gains and profits as he can by any lawful business or Employment During his natural Life.*

*In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand & Seal, the tenth day of July, anno que Domini 1769, In the ninth year of his Majesty's Reign\_\_\_\_\_*

*Signed, Sealed & Delivered  
in the presence of us*

*John Poor, jun<sup>r</sup>*

*Benjamin Poor*

*Ebenezer Poor*

*Essex, ss Andover, July 10th, 1769 ---  
m<sup>r</sup> John Poor jun<sup>r</sup> Subscriber to the above written  
Instrument acknowledged the same to be his free act  
and Deed*

*Before me, Eben<sup>r</sup> Parker, Justice of y<sup>e</sup> Peace*

Courtesy: Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem MA

## Analysis<sup>1</sup> of the Fourteen Signers of the Salem Poor Petition for Bravery

On 5 December 1775, fourteen officers, who had each personally observed the bravery of Salem Poor, signed a petition<sup>2</sup> on his behalf. This unique document is extraordinary both in its intent and in the relative status of the petitioner versus the collective status of the petitioners. The fourteen officers who signed represented five different regiments and included probably the single most-renowned survivor of the battle, Col. William Prescott:

No	Rank	Last	First	Age	Town	Regiment	Company
1	Col.	Brewer	Jonathan	50	Waltham	Jonathan Brewer	-----
2	Lt.-Col.	Nixon	Thomas Sr.	39	Framingham	John Nixon	-----
3	Col.	Prescott	William	49	Pepperell	William Prescott	-----
4	Lt. 1st	Corey	Ephraim	39	Stow	William Prescott	Oliver Parker
5	Lt. 2nd	Baker	Joseph	26	Littleton	William Prescott	Samuel Gilbert
6	Lt.	Read	Joshua	35	Woburn	James Frye	Jonas Richardson
7	Capt.	Richardson	Jonas	44	Woburn	James Frye	Jonas Richardson
8	Lt. 2nd	Bodwell	Eliphalet	35	Methuen	James Frye	John Davis
9	Lt. 1st	Foster	Josiah	46	Dracut	Ebenezer Bridge	Peter Coburn
10	Lt. 2nd	Varnum	Ebenezer	31	Dracut	Ebenezer Bridge	Peter Coburn
11	Capt.	Ballard	William Hudson	34	Amesbury	James Frye	William Hudson Ballard
12	Capt.	Smith	William	28	Lincoln	John Nixon	William Smith
13	Brig.-Surg.	Martin	John	57	Barrington RI	-----	-----
14	Clk.	Welsh	Richard	24	Dunstable	Ebenezer Bridge	Ebenezer Bancroft

It is of more than passing notice that the first signer of the petition, after the field officers, was 1st Lt. Ephraim Corey of Capt. Oliver Parker's company. Parker's company had the most Patriots of Color of any company on the field. Just after the battle, Parker left the service and Corey became captain. *It is highly probable that Ephraim Corey was the driving force behind the petition.*

That officers from five regiments would have been in a position to view the heroism of Salem Poor is revealing of the placement of members of the regiments on the battlefield. To have seen his actions, the signers must have been in the same general area at the eastern side of the redoubt or outside its northeast corner (during the retreat).

### Prescott's Regiment

Col. William Prescott of Pepperell, with approximately 1200 men from his own and Frye's and Bridge's regiments, occupied Breed's Hill the night before the battle and constructed the redoubt. He is considered by many historians to have been the overall commander of the redoubt and immediately surrounding areas. Prescott was an excellent swordsman and reputedly had his waistcoat pierced by numbers of parries of the enemy. This regiment suffered the highest number of casualties (42 K and 28 W) of any regiment, which is indicative of the fierce and close fighting that occurred after the direct British assault on the redoubt. Prescott's regiment contained more known Patriots of Color than any other regiment.

Signers: Col. William Prescott  
1st Lt. Ephraim Corey, Capt. Oliver Parker's company  
2nd Lt. Joseph Baker, Capt. Samuel Gilbert's company

### Frye's Regiment

Col. James Frye of Andover was present at the battle and was wounded 'in the thigh by a musket ball', of which wound he died just a month after the signing of the petition. Lt. Col. (Dr.) James Brickett of Haverhill was seriously wounded in the foot and was ruptured. This regiment, also primarily stationed in the redoubt, suffered the second-highest number of casualties (15 K and 31 W) of any regiment. Salem Poor was a private in this regiment in Capt. Benjamin Ames' company.

Signers: Capt. William Hudson Ballard  
Capt. Jonas Richardson  
Lt. Joshua Read, Capt. Jonas Richardson's company  
2nd Lt. Eliphalet Bodwell, Capt. John Davis' company

<sup>1</sup> All casualty figures are from SOBO; all statements of service are from QUIN; descriptions of wounds are from pensions and various town and family histories.

<sup>2</sup> MASA 180:241.

### Bridge's Regiment

Col. Ebenezer Bridge of Billerica was present at the battle and was wounded 'on the head and the neck by a sword cut'. He was court-martialed for cowardice after the battle, but was found innocent. Lt. Col. Moses Parker of Chelmsford was seriously wounded in the knee and was left on the field, where he was taken prisoner and died after the amputation of his leg by the British in Boston. This regiment, also primarily stationed in the redoubt, suffered the third-highest number of casualties (15 K and 29 W) of any regiment.

Signers: 1st Lt. Josiah Foster, Capt. Peter Coburn's company  
2nd Lt. Ebenezer Varnum, Capt. Peter Coburn's company  
Clerk Richard Welsh, Capt. Ebenezer Bancroft's company

### Brewer's Regiment

Col. Jonathan Brewer of Waltham was present at the battle and was wounded 'in the arm'. Lt. Col. William Buckminster of Framingham was very seriously wounded by a musket ball that entered his shoulder and exited near his spine, crippling him for life. Most of this regiment was scattered on a diagonal line between the breastwork and the rail fence and suffered the fifth-highest number of casualties (7 K and 11 W) of any regiment.

Signers: Col. Jonathan Brewer

### Nixon's Regiment

Col. John Nixon of Sudbury was present at the battle. He was wounded 'severely in the groin' and was 'carried off the field'. This regiment was scattered to the northeast of the redoubt, mainly in the area known as the 'gap'. It suffered relatively moderate casualties: (3 K and 10 W).

Signers: Lt-Col. Thomas Nixon  
Capt. William Smith<sup>3</sup>

### Summary

Officers from five regiments signed the Salem Poor petition. Of the five colonels of these regiments, four were wounded (an 80% casualty rate); two were seriously wounded and one, Salem Poor's own colonel, died of his wounds. Of the five lieutenant-colonels of these regiments, three were wounded, all seriously, and one died in captivity. One of the wounded was the lieutenant-colonel of Salem Poor's regiment. These facts, plus the realization that hundreds of individual acts of courage occurred on the battlefield that day, make it all the more amazing that so many officers would choose to sign a bravery petition for a private in the ranks.

What 'Brave & gallant' acts set Salem Poor apart? It is a strong local [though unproven] tradition in Andover that he shot Lt. Col. James Abercrombie of the grenadiers, the highest-ranking British officer to have been killed or mortally wounded that day. To have performed this act, Salem Poor would have had to remain in the front ranks in the redoubt probably much longer than was prudent and would probably have been engaged in mortal hand-to-hand combat with some of the toughest of the British troops. The search for a 'smoking gun' document, which might further explain Salem Poor's feats of courage, will continue.

<sup>3</sup> There is some doubt about Smith's presence on the battlefield, per 4 March 2001 conversation with D. Michael Ryan, Historian.

What did you learn about Salem Poor from reading the text? (List important points)	Does Salem Poor have a connection to Valley Forge National Historical Park? (Explain)	What have you learned from Salem Poor's story that changes your understanding of the Revolutionary War?

## References

Information about Salem Poor:

Quintal, George Jr., *Patriots of Color "A Peculiar Beauty and Merit": African Americans and Native Americans at Battle Road & Bunker Hill*. Boston, Massachusetts: Division of Cultural Resources, Boston National Historical Park, 2004.

Additional Information about Salem Poor:

<http://www.nedhector.com>

Further Reading: Salem Poor

[http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about\\_the\\_revolution/salem\\_poor.html](http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/salem_poor.html)

Analyzed Image:

<http://blackartblog.blackartdepot.com/black-art-news/maurice-barboza-black-patriots-monument.html>

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Lord Dunmore's Proclamation:

[http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IMS/currentprojects/TAHv3/Content/PDFs/Dunmore\\_Proclamation\\_1775.pdf](http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IMS/currentprojects/TAHv3/Content/PDFs/Dunmore_Proclamation_1775.pdf)

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Virginian Response to Lord Dunmore:

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Information about the monument for Patriots of African Descent:

<http://www.nps.gov/vafo/historyculture/africanpatriotsmonument.htm>